FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Researching Research -
"Collaborative Projects"

Deadline: February 15, 2023

Disciplines conducting research on research

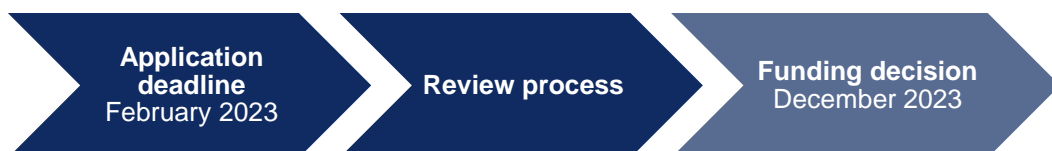Research projects

Up to 1.5 million euros

Project duration up to 4 years

Researchers who have completed their doctorate and are currently employed at a German university or research institute; international co-applicants possible

Additional funding available for science outreach and communication and/or for the preparation of research data for reuse (Open Science)

Application deadline
February 2023

Review process

Funding decision
December 2023

August 2022

1 OBJECTIVES

By funding research on research, the Volkswagen Foundation wants to support the creation, reflection and strategic application of knowledge about the realm of science.

In this context, the Foundation promotes interdisciplinary, multi-method and internationally oriented research projects in order to bring together the expertise of different communities. It supports not only the development of new knowledge but also reflection on the strategic application of the generated findings in the context of science and higher education policy. Approximately every 18 months, calls for applications with different focus topics will be published. Each topic will address one issue that is relevant to the field of research on research and that can be approached from a variety of perspectives and directions.

Current call: Systems of assessment and evaluation in science

The systems of assessment and evaluation that are in place in a scientific community play a decisive role with regard to whose career will be successful, which topics are researched and what findings will in the end be published and applied. An investigation into the mechanisms at play as well as the effects of different systems of assessment and evaluation is therefore essential to gain a better understanding of these systemic drivers.

At the heart of the issue is to discern how the workings of scientific research can be made "measurable", and consequently on what criteria assessment and evaluation systems are based, how these systems develop and what impact they have on both the outcome and work of researchers. A scientific analysis of the benefits and side effects of systems of assessment and evaluation in science furthermore promises important insights for future developments.

To gain such insights, we need research that shows how assessment and evaluation work and how they effect science past and present: in Germany as well as in other national context(s), and in different disciplines and institutions. The resulting questions are diverse. They may focus, for instance, on the obstacles that clashing systems of evaluation pose for interdisciplinary research, the impact of digitalization and the internet on academic systems of assessment, or the influence of reputation and evaluation criteria on the social composition of scientific communities – to name but a few of the potential topics.

The aim of this funding scheme is to promote the investigation of questions related to the systems of assessment and evaluation in science by combining different fields of research and methodologies. Such cooperative projects, ideally, will not only bring relevant insights, but also advance the field of "research on research" as a whole. Furthermore, research funding agencies may subsequently be in a better position to develop evidence-based procedures that can counteract problematic side-effects of current systems.

2   FUNDING OFFER

The program is open to all scholars and scientists who work on questions or topics related to research on research. It thus explicitly addresses researchers outside of Science Studies in a narrow sense, as long as they are engaging with the structure and functioning of scientific research from the perspective of their respective field. Whatever the background of the researcher, it is required for the proposed research topic to take up current debates, developments and challenges in the field "research on research" and to consider the existing literature also beyond the German context.

Funding will be provided for collaborative projects that involve researchers from disciplines or fields related to research on research. Research questions must be relevant to the specific topic of the call and engage a variety of perspectives, different research methods must be applied or existing methodological approaches combined in a new way. Applications should clearly demonstrate in what way the chosen theoretical and methodological approach as well as the research question(s) are original and innovative. The Foundation expressly welcomes internationally oriented projects involving international cooperation partners or an international project advisory board. Depending on the project requirements, representatives of relevant stakeholders such as libraries, publishers, information infrastructures, professional societies or funding organizations can also be included as project partners.

3 FUNDING FRAMEWORK

The program addresses researchers of all career stages from postdoc onwards. The lead applicant must work at a university or research institution in Germany and be substantially involved in the project, both in terms of content and with regard to the share of the funding he/she receives. He/she is responsible for all communication and reporting to the Foundation. The involvement of international researchers as co-applicants is greatly appreciated. In such case, it is important, however, that all project partners contribute on equal terms, irrespective also of their career status. A project team usually consists of two to four partners; research projects of individual scholars are not eligible for funding.

In each round, four to five collaborative projects will receive funding for a period of four years and with a maximum funding volume of 1.5 million euros. There is a high degree of flexibility with regard to the composition of the project team and the requested funding volume. Both small and large project teams are equally eligible for funding. A higher funding volume seems appropriate primarily for data-intensive projects or in cases when multiple international project partners are involved and it must be justified accordingly. An essential requirement for all research groups who receive funding is to organize a conference in the final year of the project. The aim of the conference should be to reflect on the generated findings and the ways they could be put to use by relevant players in the research system.

The Foundation supports Open Science (Open Science Policy of the Volkswagen Foundation, Download, PDF). Project results therefore have to be published Open Access and collected data is to be made available for scientific use in public, non-commercial repositories or databases.

Funds may be requested to cover the following types of expenses:

- Personnel funds (postdocs, doctoral students, teaching substitutes for professorships for max. 2 semesters, graduate or undergraduate research assistants, technical staff).
- Non-personnel funds (research stays at other institutions in Germany and abroad, visiting scholars, funds for data collection and analysis, field research or

archival research, funds for data backup and management, workshops, travel and conference funds, science communication, publication costs, consumables and services, etc.).

In the event that libraries, publishers, information infrastructures, professional societies or funding organizations are involved as project partners, a small amount of funding for travel expenses and/or work contracts for these partners may be included in the budget of the lead applicant.

Successful applications will receive additional funds for the planning and implementation of the mandatory conference, which should be held in the final year of the funding period. It is not possible to apply for funds to cover the overheads of the hosting institution.

Each applicant may only submit one proposal for a collaborative project in each round. In case of approval, the funds will be awarded to the institution of the lead applicant, which must be located in Germany.

If an application for a collaborative project is rejected, the persons involved may reapply in future calls for proposals. In this case, however, a new research question and a new project constellation are required.

The Foundation cannot be held responsible for any obligations entered into prior to the receipt of grant approval.

4 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications have to be submitted by the respective deadline. Upcoming application deadlines are announced on the Foundation's website.

The Foundation checks if incoming applications fulfil the formal requirements. Subsequently, they are reviewed by an international and interdisciplinary panel of experts, usually in a two-stage procedure. After a pre-selection based on the written applications,

some project teams are invited to present their project to the review committee. The following criteria will be considered in the review process:

- Significance and relevance of the research question(s) for the topic of the call
- Connection to current debates and the state of research in "research on research"
- Innovativeness of the project and novelty of the research approach
- Soundness of project design and level of scientific quality of the project
- Original and coherent combination of different methodological approaches and disciplinary perspectives
- Scientific qualification of the participants in the context of the topic
- Appropriate composition of the project team with a view to career stages, research fields and international orientation

Applicants will be informed about the funding decision approximately ten months after the deadline.

5 CHECKLIST

Please submit your proposal online via the electronic application system on the Foundation's website and use the template provided for download in section 6.
Co-applicants must be "invited" by the lead applicant to collaborate on formulating the application and should "accept" the invitation before registering in the application system.

Applications must be submitted in English.

The following files (pdf) are required:
- Proposal and justification, max. 12 pages incl. references, Arial 11. Please use the template provided for download (template, Download, RTF).
- Cost projection in form of a table with brief justification for each item. Please differentiate by applicant here.

- Data management plan (Download, RTF) in case of data-intensive projects (If available, please use the data management plan of the repository of your choice).
- Short CV of all applicants (max. two pages per applicant with information on current position and listing of up to ten publications relevant to the project. Please combine the CVs of all applicants in one file).
- Additionally, please enter the cost breakdown directly into the application system. Please enter a separate cost projection for each applicant.

Applicants who do not have an affiliation with a university or scientific institution at the time of application should supplement the application with an official statement from the host professorship or department/institute. The statement must indicate the willingness to enter into an employment relationship with the applicant for the corresponding funding period and to administer the funds in the event of a successful application.

Applications that have been or are intended to be submitted in this or a similar form to another funding organization will not be processed by the Foundation. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements will not be submitted for review. The Foundation can only award funds to scientific institutions.

Please read the information about the electronic application system on the website of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. The information can be found in the document "Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips". If you have technical questions about using the electronic application system, please contact support@volkswagenstiftung.de.

6 CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Information

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More information

- Template proposal and justification (Download, RTF)

- FAQs about the application

- What we do NOT support

- Electronic application made easy - instructions and tips

- Electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation

- Open Science Policy of the Volkswagen Foundation, Download, PDF

- Data Management Plan (Download, RTF)